

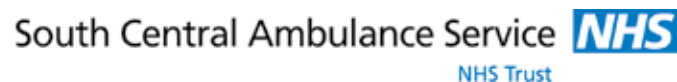


“Vodafone’s technology and can-do approach will benefit both our employees and the local communities we serve.”

Vince Weldon, Associate Director of Information Management and Technology, South Central Ambulance Service

power to you





South Central Ambulance Service (SCAS) was created in 2006 following the merger of four ambulance trusts in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire.

The reorganisation followed a strategic review of NHS ambulance services throughout England, led by Peter Bradley, the then Chief Executive of the London Ambulance Service and the Labour Government's National Ambulance Adviser.

Peter's report set the scene for a transformation of ambulance services, away from a primary focus on resuscitation, trauma and acute care towards becoming the mobile health resource for the whole NHS – taking healthcare to the patient in the community.

Stretching from Milton Keynes in the north of the region, down to Portsmouth and Southampton in the south, SCAS and its 2,500 strong team cover a diverse territory of over 3,500 square miles and a residential population of more than four million people.

Each year its emergency control centres deal with over 450,000 calls for assistance from towns and cities, villages and rural hamlets, the busy motorway network to the west of London and the ever-popular south coast seaside resorts.

Legacy systems

Since the reorganisation in 2006, SCAS has been working hard to take advantage of a range of opportunities to achieve savings, efficiencies and service improvements. To do this, it is replacing legacy IT and telecoms systems from the four pre-existing organisations with a single streamlined system, utilising the latest technological developments.

All of these efforts are designed to ensure that SCAS continues to meet and exceed all of its vital speed of response targets, including that of arriving on scene to at least 75% of serious incidents within just eight minutes, known as the 'Red8' target.

SCAS also inherited several telecommunications suppliers, covering both fixed and mobile services. Vince Weldon, Associate Director of Information Management and Technology at SCAS was looking to replace them with a single supplier who could not only provide a resilient and integrated fixed and mobile communication solution across its footprint – but also ongoing strategic advice for added value and support.

"We knew that there were some immediate benefits to be enjoyed from rationalising these services, but it was important to look beyond these to explore longer term opportunities" says Vince.

"At a time of challenging financial circumstances for all public sector organisations, the imperative to spend less on 'cold IT' and more on frontline services has never been more important and this can only be achieved by innovation and strategic planning."

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Vince Weldon, Associate Director of Information Management and Technology, South Central Ambulance Service

Following an EU-compliant procurement process, utilising a government framework agreement, SCAS appointed Vodafone UK as its communications partner.

Vodafone will provide cost-effective fixed line services and mobile connectivity together with infrastructure support and maintenance for SCAS 999 emergency contact centres.

Unified communications

“Vodafone put forward the most attractive proposal and seemed to us to have really got to grips with us as an organisation, how we work, the pressures we face and our present and future challenges,” says Vince.

“We liked their unified communications approach and there was a mutual understanding from the outset that this was not about providing phones to make phone calls.”

Unifying SCAS communications will deliver savings estimated at £500,000 over the next five years, to be reinvested in services. Communications between its highly skilled teams of call handlers and dispatchers, paramedics and first responders throughout the region will improve as they deliver vital healthcare services.

In situations where every second counts, the consolidated platform will help employees to get in touch quickly with the right person.

SCAS will also work closely with Vodafone to make use of the company's expertise in communications technology to deliver other improvements. Management of its telecoms estate will be much more straightforward, freeing staff to focus on other service priorities. Historic, unused phone lines are also being identified and eliminated.

Billing processes will be streamlined and transparent with an associated reduction in traditional paper-based systems. Staff will have greater access to systems and databases on the move and workforce management applications will be used to make best use of employees' time.

The solution has a 24/7 monitoring and support package and users are already commenting on the improved stability of the network, promoting confidence for the future.

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Innovation and support

“We have a largely mobile workforce and we needed to remove the barriers between working at a desk and working on the move. We have already issued new BlackBerry® smartphones to team leaders that not only allow them to send and receive email but also to review data in real time to ensure that we are meeting our performance targets,” adds Vince.

“These days it’s like carrying a mini portable computer and I want to ensure that we make the most of what these devices can offer.

“In addition to helping us improve the effectiveness of our everyday working, we see Vodafone as a credible strategic partner and an organisation that can work with us to deliver innovation and support our ambitions in new ways of working.”

One area SCAS says it is keen to explore with Vodafone is electronic patient reporting, which has been proven to improve outcomes for patients by ensuring that both paramedics and receiving hospitals have access to up-to-date information on a hand-held device.

“This improves the quality of care at the scene while reducing risk and the need for time-consuming paperwork,” says Vince.

“We expect this partnership to successfully demonstrate how effective telecoms solutions can help in the evolution of the health sector. We have signed a deal for five years and Vodafone has already demonstrated a desire to make fast progress.

“Vodafone’s technology and can-do approach will benefit both our employees and the local communities we serve” concludes Vince.

Significant benefits

- Legacy systems from four pre-existing organisations have been replaced by a single, streamlined solution
- Savings of around £500,000 will be recycled into frontline patient care
- Reliable communications between SCAS' highly skilled teams will improve response times and outcomes for patients
- Management of a single contract with a single supplier will simplify administration and free SCAS staff to focus on other priorities
- The strategic partnership with Vodafone will enable SCAS to maximise the value of its investment in its telecoms solution

